

Remarks

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject patent application are respectfully requested.

An Information Disclosure Statement was filed on May 22, 2003 (copy enclosed along with copy of postcard stamped by USPTO to evidence its receipt on this date). Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider the information cited in this IDS and return initialed PTO-1449 forms with the next office action to evidence this consideration.

Certain amendments have been made to the claims to correct minor informalities and to otherwise improve their form. These amendments are not made in response to any rejection and are not related to patentability.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 13, 15, 24, 26, 36, 38, 41, 42 and 52 contain allowable subject matter.

The remaining claims were rejected based on various proposed combinations of documents including Van Hook *et al.* U.S. Patent No. 6,564,304, which has a filing date of September 1, 2000. The subject application claims priority to a provisional application filed on August 23, 2000, which is prior to the filing date of Van Hook *et al.* Applicants respectfully submit that the pending claims of the subject patent application are fully supported by the provisional application and are thus entitled to the benefit of the August 23, 2000 provisional application filing date. Consequently, the rejection of the claims based on Van Hook *et al.* is improper and should be withdrawn.

Applicants note that the above request to withdraw the rejection based on the earlier effective filing date of the subject patent application is not, and should not be construed to be, acquiescence in any of the contentions in the office action regarding any of the applied documents.

FOULADI et al.

Application No. 09/726,220

Response to Office Action dated August 4, 2004

The pending claims are believed to be in condition for allowance and favorable office action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.

By:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael J. Shea", is written over a horizontal line.

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